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BPS STUDENTS & STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
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 prepared by the Citywide Educational Coalition
 in cooperation with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
Q. WHO ATTENDS THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

A.	The BPS has 58,600 students in:	who are:	and are assigned to:
	kindergarten 7,800	black 48%	regular classes 67%
	elementary school 22,100	white 26%	special education programs
	middle school 12,100	Hispanic 18%	part-time 12%
	high school 16,600	Asian 8%	full-time 7%
			bilingual classes 14%

Boston's public school population is unique. Though they represent only 7% of all the public school students in the state, BPS students include:

- 49% of all the black students in public schools in the state.
- 37% of all the bilingual students in public schools in the state
- 24% of all the Hispanic students in public schools in the state
- 12% of all the students with severe special education needs in public schools in the state.
- 19% of all children on A.F.D.C. in the state.

Q. HOW DO BPS STUDENTS DO ACADEMICALLY? HOW MANY ARE PROMOTED? HOW MANY FAIL?

- A.** In 1983, the BPS began a systemwide policy which requires all students to meet certain standards to be promoted to the next grade or to graduate. This past June, 6,298 students—about 11% of all students—were not promoted. Though the standards apply to all students, the percentages of students **not** promoted varied from grade to grade:

Kindergarten 1 1%	grade 3 7%	grade 6 11%	grade 9 27%
Kindergarten 2 4%	grade 4 4%	grade 7 17%	grade 10 16%
grade 1 21%	grade 5* 4%	grade 8* 13%	grade 11 11%
grade 2 8%			grade 12* 5%

*The grades a student leaves elementary, middle and high school.

To date, the BPS has not analyzed why these students were not promoted or estimated how many were exempted from the standards by their principals.

Q. HOW DO BPS STUDENTS DO ON NATIONAL STANDARDIZED TESTS?

- A.** Boston uses the Metropolitan Achievement Tests (MAT) to compare BPS student progress to student progress across the country. Last year, BPS students scored above the national median for reading in 7 of the 12 grades and for math in 9 of the 12 grades. This year, however, they scored above the national median for reading in only 2 of the 12 grades and for math in only 5 of the 12 grades.

Though they are scored from 0-99, MAT test scores are not equivalent to grades. Scores are reported as "median percentiles" which tell how BPS students are doing as a group and how they are doing compared to other students. As an example, the 6th grade reading median of 44 means:

1. that, as a group, BPS grade 6 students scored better than 44% of all grade 6 students tested nationwide
2. that half of BPS grade 6 students scored above the 44th percentile and half scored below.

Metropolitan Achievement Test Results, 1986

Note: The national median is always 50.

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Reading	39	48	47	52	50	44	42	43	49	42	35	38
Math	51	57	54	58	60	49	46	45	42	37	34	37

Q. WHY WERE THE MAT SCORES LOWER? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- A. Part of the change in MAT scores was expected because every six or seven years the publisher rewrites the test and scores drop, generally about 7-10 points. In most grades, BPS scores declined only 2-13 points.

But the median scores for grades 1-3, usually the grades with the highest scores, dropped from 5 to 29 points. The Grade 1 reading median, e.g., went from the 68th to the 39th percentile. Some of the drop is explained by other changes: the new grade 1-3 test is much longer, and tests more difficult skills—such as reading comprehension—than the previous test did.

Despite the explanations for the scores, the fact remains that BPS students do poorly compared to other students. Scoring below the 40th percentile in reading indicates that a student needs remedial help. **By that measure, 46% of all BPS students need remediation and probably cannot read their textbooks with understanding.** The results are even more discouraging if one notes that most bilingual students and students with severe special needs are **not** tested.

Discouraging, too, is the continuing disparity in scores among students of different races. By the 12th grade, the median reading score for white students is 67, and for black and Hispanic student, 27. Of the 2,164 seniors tested last spring, 896—including 656 black and Hispanic students—could be termed functionally illiterate, scoring below the 20th percentile on the test.

Q. HOW WELL DO BPS STUDENTS SCORE ON COLLEGE BOARD TESTS?

- A. For 1985-86, BPS average SAT scores were below both state and national averages:

VERBAL:	BPS:	State:	National:	MATH:	BPS:	State:	National:
	354	436	431		408	473	475

The SATs are scored from 200-800. Boston Latin School and Latin Academy averages are much higher than other BPS high schools, by 75-176 points. Eight BPS high schools averaged under 300 in verbal scores, placing them below the 20th percentile nationally.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS TO BPS GRADUATES?

- A. In a recent survey, the Private Industry Council spoke with 2,308 students of the 2,815-member Class of 1986. Of those interviewed:

- 38% are working full-time or are in the military
- 35% are attending 4-year colleges
- 20% are attending 2-year colleges
- 7% are unemployed, at home with small children, etc.

According to the PIC, BPS statistics are encouraging: the Labor Department estimates that nationwide about 20% of all 1985 graduates were unemployed, and that rate jumps to 50% for minority high school graduates.

Q. HOW MANY BPS STUDENTS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL? WHY?

- A. A recent study of the 6,136 students who began 9th grade in 1981, found:

2,677 or 44% dropped out for a number of reasons, including age (being 16 and still in the 8th grade, for example)

2,080 or 34% graduated four years later, in June, 1985

718 or 12% transferred to other school systems

661 or 11% graduated later, were expelled, etc.

Q. WHO DOES NOT ATTEND THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

- A. Almost 26,000 school-age children who live in Boston do not:

18,300 go to parochial schools

3,400 go to private schools

3,100 go to suburban schools through METCO

1,100 go to private special education schools

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